

REMARKS

The Office Action of September 1, 2004 has been reviewed and the comments therein were carefully considered. Claims 4, 7, 9, 11, 15, 19, 21, 27, 31, 33, 41, 45 and 47 have been canceled in this current response. Claims 1, 10, 12, 16, 20, 22, 32, 35, 42, 46, 49, 50, and 51 have been amended in the current response. No new matter has been introduced into the application.

Amendments to the Drawings

The Office Action states that in paragraph [26] of the application, “the top surface of the wall (40) is reference number 45 yet reference number 45 is the top surface of the bridge member (34) in figure 4. Appropriate correction is required.” (Office Action, page 2).

The attached replacement sheet of drawings includes changes to Fig. 4. This sheet which includes Fig. 3-5, replaces the original sheet including Fig. 3-5. Applicants are submitting these replacement drawings to correct an error in which reference number 45 inadvertently points to the top surface of bridge member (34). The attached replacement correct sheet now shows that reference number 45 is the top surface of wall (40). Applicants respectfully request that the objection be removed based on the submitted correction.

Allowable subject matter

Claims 9-10, 16-17, 19-20, 31-32, 42-43, 45-46 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for indicating the allowable subject matter.

Applicants have rewritten claims 16 and 42 into independent form including all of the elements of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants respectfully submit that claims 16 and 42 are in condition for allowance. Dependent claims 17 and 43 which depend from claims 16 and 42 and are allowable for at least the same reasons as claims 16 and 42.

The Office Action indicated claims 9, 19, 31 and 45 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants submit that claims 9, 19, 31, and 45 are generic claims as stated by the Office Action in the restriction requirement mailed on 6/9/04. Each of claims 9, 19, 31 and 45 comprise the same claimed element. Applicants have amended independent claims 1, 12, 22, 35, 49, 50 and 51 to include the element stated in claims 9, 19, 31, and 45. The Applicants respectfully submit that each of independent claims 1, 12, 22, 35, 49, 50, and 51 are allowable for at least the same reason as generic claims 9, 19, 31, and 45. Similarly, dependent claims 2-6, 8, 10, 13-14, 18, 20, 23-26, 28-30, 32, 34, 36-40, 44, 46, 48, and 52-55 are allowable for at least the same reason as the independent claim from which they ultimately depend.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1-3, 5-6, 22-26, 28-29, 34, 49-50, and 54 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Dabbs.

Applicants have currently amended independent claims 1, 22, 49-50 to include the claimed element found in objected to generic claims 9, 19, 31, and 45. For at least the reason stated above, Applicants respectfully submit that each of independent claims 1, 22, and 49-50 are in condition for allowance. Dependent claims 2-3, 5-6, 23-26, 28-29, 34, and 54 are allowable for at least the same reason as the independent claim from which they ultimately depend.

Claims 12-14, 18, and 51-53 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Iwata.

Applicants have currently amended independent claims 1, 12, and 51 to include the claimed element found in objected to generic claims 9, 19, 31, and 45. For at least the reason stated above, Applicants respectfully submit that each of independent claims 1, 12, and 51 are in condition for allowance. Dependent claims 13-14, 18, and 52-53 are allowable for at least the same reason as the independent claim from which they ultimately depend.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 8 and 30 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Dabbs in view of Solheim.

Dependent claims 8 and 30 which depend from and further limit independent claims 1 and 22, respectively, are also patentably distinct for at least the same reason as the independent claim from which they ultimately depend. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully requests withdrawal of the ground of rejection of dependent claims 8 and 30.

Claims 35-40, 44, 48 and 55 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Iwata in view of Schmidt (5,472,203).

Applicants have currently amended independent claim 35 to include the claimed element found in objected to generic claims 9, 19, 31, and 45. For at least the reason stated above, Applicants respectfully submit that each of independent claim 35 is in condition for allowance. Dependent claims 36-40, 44, 48, and 55 are allowable for at least the same reason as the independent claim from which they ultimately depend. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully requests withdrawal of the

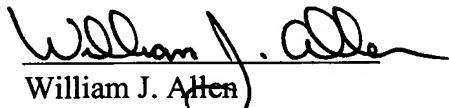
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ground of rejection of claims 35-40, 44, 48, and 55.

Applicants respectfully submit that the instant application is in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner believe that a conversation with Applicant's representative would be useful in the prosecution of this case, the Examiner is invited and encouraged to call Applicant's representative.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: December 1, 2004


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Amendments to the Drawings

The attached sheet of drawings includes changes to Fig. 4. This sheet which includes Fig. 3-5, replaces the original sheet including Fig. 3-5. Applicants are submitting these replacement drawings to correct a clerical error regarding reference number 45.

Attachment: Replacement Sheet